

A CONSUMER ELECTRONICS DEVICE

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RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is related to Provisional Application No. 60/423,057, filed on November 1, 2002, the contents of which are incorporated herein in their entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] *1. Field of the Invention*

[0003] This invention relates to a consumer electronics device. More particularly, the invention relates to a consumer electronics device having a novel structure, function, and appearance.

[0004] Many consumer device structures are known. Conventionally these consumer electronic devices are relatively plain in there in form. The outer appearance of the structure and the appearance is of a defined shape and the operational controls and buttons also have a conventional form and functionality.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] According to the invention, there is provided a consumer electronics device which comprises a housing. A control panel is arranged on the housing, and the control panel has a plurality of control keys. At least one of: the control keys in combination with the surrounding housing structure of the control keys has an outline shape approximating that of at least a part of a predetermined cartoon character.

[0006] According to a second aspect of the invention, there is provided a consumer electronics device which comprises a housing. At least one control key is arranged on the housing, and a surround of the control key has an outline shape approximating that of at least a part of a predetermined cartoon character.

[0007] According to a third aspect of the invention, there is provided a consumer electronics device which comprises a housing. A control means is arranged on the housing. The control means is made up of at least one component part which defines an outline shape approximating that of at least a part of a predetermined cartoon character.

[0008] The device may be selected from the group comprising a two-way radio, a television receiver, a DVD player, a compact disc player, a video cassette recorder, a tape recorder, a clock, a radio, a cordless telephone, a mobile telephone, a remote control unit, a camera, a personal computer, a monitor and combinations of the foregoing.

[0009] It will be appreciated that, in general, the control means of the third aspect may comprise more than one component in combination to form the outline shape. Different parts or portions of the outline shape can form different independent operations and functions for activating operational equipment of the electronics of the device. The components may not be restricted to keys or buttons but could include other electrical or mechanical parts such as, for example, electrical sockets, surrounds of the keys, or the like of such parts.

[0010] Preferably, the cartoon character is a Disney® cartoon character. The part of the cartoon character may be the head and ears of Mickey Mouse®. However, it is also contemplated that a cartoon character could be formed selectively from a single component of the control means or control panel or from multiple components, in combination, of the control means or control panel. Thus, for example, additional keys or buttons of the control means or control panel could form or suggest the bow tie and/or body and/or feet of the Mickey Mouse® cartoon character, or the shape of some other cartoon character, in particular, a Disney® cartoon character. The keys or buttons of the control means or control panel may be implemented as push buttons or slide keys. Each or some of the keys can perform different functional actions of the control of the consumer device.

[0011] To enhance the appearance of at least certain of the devices further, the housing may have a shape corresponding to an accessory worn by the predetermined cartoon character. In this case, at least a part of the housing of the device may approximate the shape of the bow worn by Minnie Mouse® atop her head. The device in question may be the personal computer. The housing itself in an overall appearance can constitute a representation of the cartoon character or part of the cartoon character. Thus different features of the cartoon character, head, eyes, tail hands feet, for example, are constituted by different elements of the device. For instance the tail can be constituted by a wire or an antenna. Ears can be constituted as speakers. The mouth can be the input drive for a CD or a DVD player.

[0012] Where appropriate, the device may be provided in combination with a holder. The holder may be one of a carrying case and a battery charging stand.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] The invention is now described by way of examples with reference to the following drawings in which:

[0014] Figure 1 shows a three dimensional view of a consumer electronics device, in the form of a two-way radio, in accordance with the invention;

[0015] Figure 2 shows a three dimensional view of a consumer electronics device, in the form of a monitor, in accordance with the invention;

[0016] Figure 3 shows a three dimensional view of a consumer electronics device, in the form of a remote control unit, in accordance with the invention;

[0017] Figure 4 shows a three dimensional view of a consumer electronics device, in the form of a television receiver/DVD player combination, in accordance with the invention;

[0018] Figure 5 shows a three dimensional view of a consumer electronics device, in the form of a compact disc player, in accordance with the invention;

[0019] Figure 6 shows a three dimensional view of a consumer electronics device, in the form of a compact disc player, in accordance with the invention;

[0020] Figure 7 shows a three dimensional view of a consumer electronics device, in the form of a cordless telephone, in accordance with the invention;

[0021] Figure 8 shows a three dimensional view of a consumer electronics device, in the form of a DVD player, in accordance with the invention;

[0022] Figure 9 shows a three dimensional view of a consumer electronics device, in the form of a boombox, in accordance with the invention;

[0023] Figure 10 shows a three dimensional view of a consumer electronics device, in the form of a radio, in accordance with the invention;

[0024] Figure 11 shows a three dimensional view of a consumer electronics device, in the form of a radio, in accordance with the invention;

[0025] Figure 12 shows a front view of a consumer electronics device, in the form of a television receiver/ DVD player combination, in accordance with the invention;

[0026] Figure 13 shows a front view of a consumer electronics device, in the form of a television receiver, in accordance with the invention; and

[0027] Figures 14 to 18 show various embodiments of a control panel arrangement for the consumer electronics device.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0028] In Figure 1 of the drawings, reference numeral 10 generally designates a consumer electronics device, in the form of a two-way radio. The two-way radio 10 includes a housing 12 supporting a display 14 and a control panel 16. The control panel 16 has a button or key array 18 approximating the head and ears of the Disney® cartoon character, Mickey Mouse®. Thus, the array 18 has a "Talk" key 20. Keys 22 and 24, representing the "ears" of the cartoon character are used for decreasing or increasing, respectively, the volume of the device 10.

[0029] An antenna 26 is mounted on the housing 12.

[0030] The housing 12 and the antenna 26 are shaped to have a cartoon-like appearance.

[0031] In Figure 2 of the drawings, a consumer electronics device, in the form of a monitor/ DVD player combination 30 is illustrated.

[0032] The combination 30 includes a housing 32 which houses a monitor 34. A control panel 36 is mounted adjacent a slot 38 in which a DVD is receivable. Once again, the control panel 36 includes a key array 40 having a central key or button 42 representing a head of the cartoon character with ancillary buttons 44 and 46 arranged above the key or button 42. Thus, the array 40, once again, represents the shape of the head and ears of Mickey Mouse®.

[0033] The housing 32 is of an irregular shape to provide a cartoon-like appearance.

[0034] In Figure 3 of the drawings, a consumer electronics device in the form of a remote control unit is illustrated and is designated by the reference numeral 50. The remote control unit 50 includes a housing 52 having a control panel 54 arranged on the housing. The control panel 54 includes a key array 56. The key array 56 has a first key 58 representing a head of the Mickey Mouse® cartoon character. The key 58 is a play/pause button. Keys 60 and 62, representative of the "ears" of the Mickey Mouse® cartoon character are arranged adjacent the key 58. The key 60 is a rewind key and the key 62 is a fast forward key.

[0035] The housing 52 of the remote control unit 50 supports an annular bezel 64 at one end. The bezel 64 is rotatable so that various electrical devices such as a television receiver, a radio, a VCR, a DVD player, or the like can be controlled via the remote control unit 50.

[0036] In Figure 4 of the drawings, a television receiver/DVD player combination 30 is illustrated. With reference to Figure 2 of the drawings, like reference numerals refer to like parts, unless otherwise specified.

[0037] In this embodiment of the invention, the housing 32 is supported between a pair of spaced posts 70. Each post 70 terminates, at its lower end, in a foot 72 and, at

its upper end, in a bulbous portion 74. Each bulbous portion 74 supports a speaker 76. Once again, the shapes of the components of the combination 30 are such as to impart a cartoon-like effect to the combination 30.

[0038] In Figure 5 of the drawings, reference numeral 80 generally designates a consumer electronics device in the form of a CD player. The CD player 80 has a housing 82 including a lid portion 84. The lid portion 84 carries a control panel arrangement 86. The control panel arrangement 86 includes a key array 88 having a first key 90, being a play/pause key representing the head of the Mickey Mouse® cartoon character. Ancillary keys 92 and 94, being rewind and fast forward keys, respectively, represent the "ears" of the Mickey Mouse® cartoon character.

[0039] In Figure 6 of the drawings, a second embodiment of the CD player 80 is illustrated. With reference to Figure 5 of the drawings, like reference numerals refer to like parts, unless otherwise specified.

[0040] In this embodiment of the invention, the CD player 80 includes secondary keys 98 and 100. The keys 98 and 100 each have a surround 102 representative of an outline of the head and ears of the Mickey Mouse® cartoon character.

[0041] In Figure 7 of the drawings, a consumer electronics device in the form of a cordless telephone/battery recharging stand combination 110 is illustrated. The combination 110 includes a cordless telephone 112 and a battery recharging stand 114. The battery recharging stand 114 defines a socket 116 in which the cordless telephone 112 is receivable for recharging a battery of the cordless telephone 112.

[0042] The cordless telephone 112 has a housing 118 on which a control panel arrangement 120 and a display 122 are arranged. Once again, the control panel arrangement 120 includes a key array 124 having a "Talk" key 126 representative of a head of the Mickey Mouse® cartoon character and ancillary buttons or keys 128 and 130 for decreasing or increasing the talk volume, respectively.

[0043] The stand 114 includes an antenna 132. The antenna 132 has the appearance of a tail of a cartoon character to impart a cartoon-like character to the combination 110.

[0044] The consumer electronics device comprises a housing; and a control panel arranged on the housing, the control panel having a plurality of control keys. The outline shape of the housing approximates that of at least a part of a predetermined cartoon character. Keys can collectively be arranged that together several of the keys define a features of the cartoon character.

[0045] In Figure 8 of the drawings, reference numeral 140 generally designates a consumer electronics device in the form of a DVD player. The player 140 includes a housing 142 defining a slot 144 in which a DVD is receivable. A control panel arrangement 146 of the player 140 includes a key array 148. The array 148 has a play/pause key 150 representing a head of the Mickey Mouse® cartoon character. Further, the array 148 includes a rewind key 152 and a fast forward key 154 representing the "ears" of the cartoon character.

[0046] The housing 142 is supported on feet 156 representative of a cartoon character to impart a cartoon-like appearance to the device 140.

[0047] Referring to Figure 9 of the drawings, a consumer electronics device, in the form of a boombox 160 is illustrated. The boombox 160 includes a housing 162 including two speakers 164 and 160. The housing 162 is arranged in a broad U-shape. The housing 162 has a central region 168 with control buttons 170 on the front face.

[0048] In Figure 10 of the drawings, a consumer electronics device, in the form of a portable radio 180 is illustrated. The radio 180 has a housing 182 worn by a strap 184 about a neck of a user.

[0049] The radio 180 has a control panel 186 arranged on the housing 182. The control panel 186 includes a central button 188 representing a head of the Mickey Mouse® character with ancillary buttons 190 and 192 representing "ears" of the character.

[0050] The housing 182 further supports a display 194.

[0051] In Figure 11 of the drawings, a consumer electronics device in the form of a clock/radio combination is illustrated and is designated generally by the reference numeral 200.

[0052] The combination 200 has a bulbous, cartoon-like housing 202 supporting a control panel arrangement 204. The control panel arrangement 204, once again, includes a key array 206 having a central key 208 representing a head of the Mickey Mouse® cartoon character and ancillary keys 210 and 212 representing the "ears" of the cartoon character. A display 214, including a clock display, is arranged in the housing 202.

[0053] In Figure 12 of the drawings, reference numeral 220 generally designates a television receiver/DVD player combination. With reference to Figure 4 of the drawings, like reference numerals refer to like parts, unless otherwise specified.

[0054] In this embodiment of the invention, the housing 32 comprises a first, upper housing 32.1 supporting the monitor 34 and an upper control panel arrangement 36.1. A second, lower housing 32.2 supports the DVD player 38 and a lower control panel arrangement 36.2. The control panel arrangement 36.1 includes a control key array 40.1 having a central key 42.1 and ancillary keys 44.1 and 46.1 representing the head, and "ears", respectively, of the Mickey Mouse® cartoon character. Similarly, the control panel arrangement 36.2 includes a second control key array 40.2 having a central, head key 42.2 and "ear" keys 44.2 and 46.2.

[0055] Referring to Figure 13 of the drawings, a television receiver is illustrated and is designated generally by the reference numeral 230. The television receiver 230 is the same as the television receiver part of the combination 220 illustrated in Figure 12 of the drawings but having only a single housing 32.

[0056] Figures 14 to 18 show various embodiments of control panel arrangements 250 for the consumer electronics device, in accordance with the invention.

[0057] In Figures 14, 16 and 18, each control panel arrangement, in addition to including keys or buttons 252 and 254 representative of the "head" and "ears" of the

Mickey Mouse® cartoon character, includes a button or key 256 representative of his "bow tie". Further, in the case of the control panel arrangements 250 in Figures 14, 15 and 17, the arrangements 250 include keys or buttons 258 representative of, or suggesting, the "body" of the Mickey Mouse® character.

[0058] In the case of the control panel arrangement 250 shown in Figure 18 of the drawings, a socket 260 for an input or output jack (not shown) has a surround 262 in the shape of the "head" and "ears" of the Mickey Mouse® cartoon character.

[0059] Accordingly, it is an advantage of the invention that a consumer electronics device is provided which has an attractive character and is readily recognizable by its arrangement of control keys.

[0060] It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive.